

Message Text

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SUBJ: NOVEMBER 20: REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC BUT NO REVOLUTION

REF: MEXICO 14711

1. "WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY? NOTHING COULD BE MORE ABSURB." THIS WAS PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE WAVE OF "COUP RUMORS" WHICH LITERALLY SWEEPED MEXICO AND US BORDER STATES ON FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19. AND SO IT WAS. EXCEPT FOR THE RHETORIC, SATURDAY THE 20TH, MEXICO'S "DIA DE LA REVOLUCION", CELEBRATING OUTBREAK OF THE 1910 REVOLUTION, WAS QUIET, EVEN IN THE NORTHWEST, WHERE THE PRESIDENT THE DAY BEFORE HAD EX-PROPRIATED AND IMMEDIATELY DISTRIBUTED SOME 100,000 HECTARES OF LAND.

2. IN MEXICO CITY THE ANNUAL PARADE FOR THIS OCCASION WAS KICKED OFF BY A CEREMONY TRASFERRING THE REMAINS OF PANCHE VILLA TO MEXICO'S PANTHEON OF REVOLUTIONARY HEROES. ALTHOUGH VILLA'S CHIEF VIRTUE AS A REVOLUTIONARY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THAT "HE MADE THE GRINGOS TREMBLE", THE OCCASION STIMULATED LOTS OF REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC, BUT ALL SUITABLE FOR THE OCCASION. NEWSPAPERS HIGHLIGHTED EDUCATION SECRETARY BRAVO AHUJA'S AFFIRMATION OF "ABSOLUTE FAITH" IN THE ARMED FORCES, BUT BRAVO HIMSELF HAD NOT STRESSED THE

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IDEA. MOST OF THE SET SPEECHES WERE IGNORED IN SUNDAY'S

PRESS, HEADLINES BEING DEVOTED TO COMMENTARY ON THE RUMORS. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL FIGURES ALL JOINED THE PRESIDENT IN CONDEMNING THE RUMORS, SOME WITH VEHEMENCE, OTHERS MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH RIDICULE. FORMER PRESIDENCY SECRETARY CERVANTES DEL RIO LABELLED THEM AN "ACT AGAINST MEXICO"; INTERIOR SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA ATTRIBUTED THE RUMORS TO A "CAMPAIGN TO DESTROY CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT", BUT, SEEING THE BRIGHT SIDE, THOUGHT THAT WHEN THE RUMORS PROVED FALSE, THE PEOPLE WOULD BE IMMUNE TO THE DISEASE OF FUTURE RUMORS. ATTORNEY GENERAL OJEDA PAULLADA AND MOYA PALENCIA, STANDING TOGETHER WITH ARMY CHIEF CUENCA DIA, LAUGHINGLY TOLD REPORTERS THAT CUENCA HAD DETAINED THEM, BUT HAD LET THEM OUT TO ATTEND THE CEREMONIES.

3. OTHERS REACTED MORE SERIOUSLY. IN VILLAHERMOSA, TABASCO SATURDAY NIGHT, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HINTED THAT THE RUMORS MIGHT NOT BE OF MEXICAN ORIGIN, SINCE "WE MEXICANS ARE FRANK, OPEN, STRAIGHTFORWARD...AND THE RUMORS ARE METHODS THAT WE DON'T KNOW; THEY ARE TECHNICALLY SOPHISTICATED". PARM (SMALLEST OPPOSITION PARTY) PRESIDENT AZCUAGA PICKED UP ON THIS THEME, SUGGESTING US EMBASSY INVOLVEMENT. OPPOSITION PARTY OF NATIONAL ACTION (PAN) SPOKESMAN ATTRIBUTED THE RUMORS TO A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOM BUT JOINED PARM IN CALLING FOR AN IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION.

4. COMMENT: WHETHER THE RUMORS WILL DIE DOWN OR PERSIST THROUGH INAUGURATION DAY REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE PRINCIPAL EFFECT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE NOVEMBER 19 RUN ON THE PESO WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE BANK OF MEXICO DECISION TO ORDER COMMERCIAL BANKS TO SUSPEND FOREIGN EXCHANGE TRANSACTIONS (SEE SEPTELS) BEGINNING TODAY.
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